

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Office Action dated March 9, 2006, has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 2, 6-7, 11, 15-21, 31, 39-43, 47, and 114 are provisionally rejected on the grounds of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-41 of co-pending Application No. 10/661,515 in view of Hashizume. Claims 3-5 are provisionally rejected on the grounds of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1 of co-pending Application No. 10/661,515 and Hashizume and further in view of Satoshi. Applicants have cancelled these claims from the co-pending 10/661,515 application. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that these double patenting rejections be withdrawn.

Claims 114-117 are provisionally rejected on the grounds of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-41 of co-pending Application No. 10/700,475 in view of Hashizume. Applicants file herewith a terminal disclaimer with respect to co-pending application 10/700,475 to overcome the double patenting rejection. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of that rejection.

Claims 108-112 and 114 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hashizume. Claim 113 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hashizume in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/005669 to Lofaro. Claims 1-7, 31, 39-43, 108-112, and 114 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Satoshi and Hashizume. Claims 15-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Satoshi and Hashizume in view of U.S. Patent 5,766,407 to Miwa. Claims 39-42, and 108-112 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Satoshi and Hashizume in view of U.S. Patent 5,979,739 to Jin. Claim 113 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Satoshi, Hashizume, and Jin and further in view of Lofaro.

Applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claims 52-83, and 86-106 and for indicating that claims 12-14, 20-30, 32-38, 44-47 and 115-117 include allowable subject matter. Applicants have amended an independent claim 1 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claim 12 and rewrite claims 20, 22, 32, 44, and 47 in independent form. Accordingly, claims 1-19, and 20-47 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

The rejection of claims 108-112 is respectfully traversed and reconsideration is requested. Claims 108-112 are allowable over the cited references in that each of these claims recites a combination of elements including, for example, “an upper stage including a lower surface and at least one guiding groove within the lower surface, wherein fingers of a substrate loader are receivable within a respective guiding groove” as recited in claims 108 and 112. None of the cited references including Hashizume, Lofaro, Satoshi, Miwa, and Jin, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention. The structure of claims 108 and 112 of the present invention is different from the Hashizume structure in that Hashizume does not disclose or suggest “fingers of a substrate loader are receivable within a respective guiding groove” as recited in claims 108 and 112. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 108 and 112 and claims 109-111 and 113, which depend from claims 108 and 112, are allowable over the cited references.

The rejection of claim 114 is respectfully traversed and reconsideration is requested. Claim 114 is allowable over the cited references in that each of these claims recites a combination of elements including, for example, “a suction force transmitter arranged within each passage, the suction force transmitter having a transmission source that is projectable from within the passage to a predetermined distance from the lower surface of the upper stage” as recited in claim 114. None of the cited references including Hashizume, Lofaro, Satoshi, Miwa, and Jin, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 114 and claims 115-117, which depend from claim 114, are allowable over the cited references.

Applicants believe the foregoing amendments place the application in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

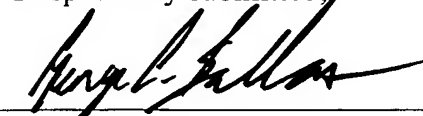
If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the

filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911. *A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.*

Respectfully submitted,

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By



George G. Ballas
Registration No. 52,587
McKENNA LONG & ALDRIDGE LLP
1900 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 496-7500
Attorneys for Applicant